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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

246th meeting

Thursday, 19 April 2001, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Ms. Quarless ..... (Jamaica)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Election of officers

The Chairperson: As representatives may recall, the Commission has not yet elected two Vice-Chairmen from the Group of African States. Since consultations were ongoing, it was decided that we would address the matter at a later stage. I have now been informed that the Group of African States has reached consensus on candidates for the two remaining posts of Vice-Chairmen on the Bureau.

I now give the floor to the representative of Mozambique, Mr. Nuno Tomás, to nominate the candidates.

Mr. Tomás (Mozambique): I am pleased to inform the Commission that after consultations, the African Group has decided to nominate Mr. Ismail Khairat of Egypt and Mr. Jean Philip Du Preez of South Africa as Vice-Chairmen.

As there is no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect, by acclamation, Mr. Ismail Khairat of Egypt and Mr. Jean Philip Du Preez of South Africa to the posts of Vice-Chairmen of the Disarmament Commission.

It was so decided.

The Chairperson: Allow me, on behalf of the other members of the Bureau, to warmly welcome Mr. Jean Philip Du Preez and Mr. Ismail Khairat to the Bureau. I look forward to their good counsel and to their support as they join the Bureau for the remainder of the work of the Commission.

Programme of work

The Chairperson: I invite members to turn their attention to the timetable for the final week of our deliberations, set out in informal paper no. 3. The attention of delegations is drawn to the fact that, on request, the meeting of Working Group I on the afternoon of Tuesday, 24 April, will be held in the Trusteeship Council Chamber instead of in Conference Room 4. Delegations should also note that the Bureau has decided to conclude the work of the Working Groups on the morning of Thursday, 26 April, in order to give the Secretariat time to complete the draft report of the Commission. In the interest of ensuring equity in the number of meetings of the two Working Groups, the Thursday morning time will be divided equally between Working Group I and Working Group II.

Reports by Chairpersons of Working Groups

The Chairperson: I call on the Chairman of Working Group I, Mr. Yaw Odei Osei, to present his report.

Mr. Osei (Ghana), Chairman of Working Group I: Working Group I has had five meetings so far. Our first meeting took place on Wednesday, 11 April. At that meeting I presented my revised non-paper (A/CN.10/2001/WG.I/WP.1), which was really an update of the basic document annexed to the report of the Commission to the General Assembly at its fifty-

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fifth session (A/55/42). On presenting the revised paper to the Working Group, I requested the Group to consider offering new suggestions or proposals relating to the paper. However, on that day there was not much by way of interaction. In the event, the Working Group agreed instead to consider, as a first step, a new draft structure for the outcome document, which I had proposed to the Group. That was the basis of our work on 12 April, and at its second meeting, on that date, the Working Group considered a revised draft structure, and reached broad agreement on it. This is set out in document A/CN.10/2001/WG.I/CRP.1/Rev.1.

At its third and fourth meetings, held on Monday and Tuesday, 16 and 17 April, the Working Group used the Chairman's updated non-paper to begin to reconsider elements in the non-paper under the new draft structure, on which broad agreement had been reached at the earlier meeting. At my invitation, delegations made both oral and written proposals outlining new elements, clarifying existing ones and recommending the relocation of some elements of the Chairman's non-paper within the framework of the new agreed draft structure. One of the reasons for adopting that procedure was to allow delegations to assist the Chairman to prepare a structured compilation of all written submissions and oral statements.

On Wednesday, 18 April, at our fifth meeting, I presented for the Group's further consideration the compilation, structured under the new headings to which the Group had agreed. This was simply the gathering of similar ideas under appropriate rubrics, indicating the countries responsible for submissions and the sources of the various elements, including General Assembly resolutions. I must emphasize that this excluded any value judgement whatsoever on the part of the Chair. As we began to look at the new document (A/CN.10/2001/WG.I/CRP.2), I emphasized that it did not represent a text for negotiation. At that meeting, I merely encouraged additional suggestions or comments, both oral and written, on the elements under the various structural headings. The approach which we adopted yesterday will be continued this morning, at the sixth meeting of the Working Group, to be held after the adjournment of the present meeting of the Disarmament Commission.

I hope to come out with a Chairman's working paper tomorrow on the basis of the clarifications, proposals and presentations made at yesterday's and this morning's meetings of Working Group I. That working paper will be based on the compilation and the relevant comments that have been made on it. But, of course, I must add that I will probably have to exercise some degree of discretion and judgement to try to marry, under the various sub-headings, ideas that are similar, that are closely related to one another or that, in the Chair's judgement, convey the same thrust. The Chair will try in that exercise to be as even-handed, comprehensive and balanced as possible. Of course, in the exercise of such good intentions, the paper will remain my sole responsibility.

I would anticipate that our work on Friday and on Monday through Wednesday of next week will be to look at the Chairman's working paper in greater detail and to come to some understanding about its shape, for attachment to the final draft report of the Commission at this session.

The Chairperson: I thank the Chairperson of Working Group I for his report and for the document he has circulated for the attention of delegations.

If delegations have no comments on the report of the Chairperson of Working Group I, I invite the Chairperson of Working Group II, Ms. Gabriela Martinic, to present her report.

Ms. Martinic (Argentina), Chairperson of Working Group II (*spoke in Spanish*): Following the suggestions of delegations, Working Group II started its work with a meeting devoted to a general exchange of views, and we continued with a first reading of the non-paper, chapter by chapter, getting as far as chapter III, related to practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. During the reading, numerous valuable suggestions have been made to improve the non-paper, and several points have been raised that will require further discussion and elaboration in order to accommodate the concerns of all. We hope to conclude the reading of the non-paper over the next few days and to have an opportunity to hold a preliminary exchange of views on the recommendations, which, undoubtedly, will clarify the content to be included in the chapters.

In this regard, I would like to highlight and express appreciation for the constructive participation, flexibility and goodwill of all delegations to face the challenging task we have ahead.

In summary, I believe we are moving in the right direction, without haste but without delay, and that next

year we will be in a position to conclude our three-year cycle with a product that will be satisfactory to all.

The Chairperson: I thank the Chairperson of Working Group II for her report.

I open the floor to delegations for comments on the report of the Chairperson of Working Group II.

Mr. Morino (Japan): I also thank the Chairperson of Working Group II for her explanation of all the work that has been done so far.

I would like to pose just one very simple question. Is it the intention of the Chairperson of Working Group II to produce a compilation of all proposals or ideas presented in Working Group II, as is the procedure in Working Group I?

Ms. Martinic (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like, through you, Madam Chairperson, to thank the representative of Japan for his question. Indeed, in the Group we have discussed the possibility of having a compilation of references to various documents related to confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, as well as references to meetings on this item. Some delegations have made contributions. However, in our exchange it was obvious that delegations will require a certain amount of time to be able to give me the material and for me to be able to present this compilation.

That is why I feel the most appropriate thing in this Group is to demonstrate a certain amount of flexibility, so that delegations will have enough time to submit their material, particularly bearing in mind that the disarmament agenda is quite heavy this year and that delegations also have a series of obligations, the most important one this year being the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. That is why we feel that the best approach would be to adopt a flexible stance, as I said. I feel that this compilation could be distributed during our inter-sessional period.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.